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AMERICAN HOME DECORATION.



O one can have failed to notice that, with the growth of artistic knowledge and artistic taste in any community, comes a corresponding desire on the part of individuals to surround themselves in their homes, and even in their places of business, with those things that are beautiful as well as useful, and that lend themselves to the delight of the eye and to the refreshing and stimulating of the intellect and the æsthetic sense. In fact, this is the real source and inspiration of all art, as well as its product, and, although it has always been more or less the fashion to decry as a "craze" such manifestations of a growth in taste for architectural adornment and artistic interior decorating and furnishing, it is nevertheless proof of a very healthful condition of things when individuals and communities allow their innate love for the beautiful to possess them, and to realize that the principles of beauty have as sound foundation in the necessities of life as have the theories of commerce or of other phases of material activity. The truth is that the æsthetic is as much a component and essential element of human nature as the purely intellectual or material.

The home is the centre of life, and naturally, therefore, its adornment is the first consideration with all people. The results are not always admirable it must be confessed. Limited resources and crude taste will pin on the wall the chromo, the gaily-colored advertising card or the cheap print, load the mantel with gruesome colored glass trinkets and hang here and there cheap worsteds, and tidies fearfully and wonderfully made. That is not, however, without its good; it is even well as far as it goes. It marks a beginning, and that is really a great deal. It evidences an innate though uncultivated taste, a longing for something better than bare walls and carpenter-built furniture. The rest will follow in due time, for the love of the beautiful feeds and grows upon itself, and the day is sure to come when the chromo makes way for the good engraving, etching or water color, the glass is replaced with a bit of faience, and tidies and worsteds are relegated to the rag-bag.

These are indubitable facts, and it seems to us

that in no way can a better work be accomplished for art generally, and for individuals in particular, than in this direction. Theorizing, the general inculcation of art principles, and the diffusion of art knowledge are well enough in their way, and, in fact, essential, but they are after all only means to certain ends, and one of the most important of these ends is that which pertains to the beautifying of the homes of the people.

Seriously impressed with this idea, we have established this Home Decoration department, with the intention of making it one of the strongest and most important features of our magazine. Herein we shall treat of whatsoever naturally pertains to the subject, and we expect to give much practical information that will be of value to our readers in suggesting to them how to adorn their homes, and make their lives more cheerful and more enjoyable to just that extent that they are more artistically surrounded. In this work we have enlisted the coöperation of the principal decorative art societies, leading artists, architects and professional decorators and the prominent manufacturers of and dealers in all kinds of art goods. Upon these sources we propose to draw for original designs and practical suggestions. What we present here shall not be scraps of information idly gathered, but shall come with the stamp of authority from those whose practical training, thorough knowledge and ripe experience preëminently qualify them to speak on the subject.

Nor do we intend to let our work end with what is printed in these columns from month to month. We propose to put the services of ourselves and of those associated with us, quite at the disposal of any persons who may desire information of any kind regarding home decorating and furnishing. Our American art workers, technical schools, decorative societies, manufacturers and commercial houses are fully alive to the demands now being made upon them for artistic home decoration, and we offer ourselves as a medium of communication between them and those of our readers who may find personal access to such sources of supply a difficult matter. Thus we hope to assist in placing the products of American artists and artisans in textile fabrics, furniture, carpets, pictures, pottery, glass, metals, etc., in many American homes, and to fully

justify the purposes of our magazine, which we have before asserted to be the conserving and promoting of American art in all its branches.

This department is in charge of an accomplished lady who has made a special study of the subject, and who will be glad to answer any and all inquiries that may be addressed us concerning it, and to freely give such advice, suggestions and information as may be desired.

TEACHING COLOR IN SCHOOLS.

Schemes of color brought into the studies of school children in their drawing departments, have helped materially in the development of home decoration. At the Starr King Vacation School, held in Boston during the summer of 1884, the children were given as a primary study, lessons in color combinations, which were afterwards drawn into shape with the needle, using Kensington stitch on ornamental school bags, panels for doors, scarfs for the sideboard and table linen. The work was interesting as an expression of children who came from the poorest homes, taking their first lessons in color treatment, only six weeks before they wrought into practical form the leaves and flowers whose color they learned to define. In many poor homes to-day there is proof that this instruction is lasting, for bits of color are often shown, made from the crudest materials, but demonstrating a power to adapt any and all color to practical use. Encourage the children to tell what they think would be pretty when you are touching up the home a little; they are interested, and often help wonderfully with their bright ideas, crude as they may be.

DECORATIVE ART IN BOSTON.

The great demand for art goods, the immense trade in decorative textiles, unique furniture, crockery, bronze, brass, silver, gold and precious stone ornamentation, the steady demand of fashion in all these articles, is created by an imperative need in our American homes, which are absorbing not only wealth of color and elaborate detail in furnishing, but which seem to possess a power of growth in the direction of true artistic design and finish. There is a desire for ornamentation which shall combine home tints and present home forms in all the variations of artistic grace and beauty. The interior decoration of the best American homes over one hundred years ago was massive and dark, impressing one with a simple majesty very courtly and pleasing. It was the expression of the people of the time. To-day, with more wealth, greater culture and leisure, this simple grandeur has expanded, and with little touches here and there upon the old-time beauty we have many picturesque, artistic homes. It is the demand which creates this work, for the home-maker draws to herself every possible aid in making the house the best expression of her love for the inmates, and the stronger the individuality the more satisfactory the result, allowing that the individual has correct taste which has been educated into practical adaptation. One of the most powerful influences in this line of work has

been that of the Boston Society of Decorative Art, formed in Boston in 1878, and incorporated in 1882. The officers of the society are people of wealth and liberal culture, with broad views of popular education. The society was formed to create a standard of work which should be artistic, practical and permanent, an American idea of applied art. Through the school connected with the society this work has been carried on successfully, the work-rooms sending out orders that cannot be duplicated in this country and could not be excelled in the Old World. The superintendent is from the Royal School of Art Needlework, in London. The society has accomplished a great deal in awakening and guiding the public taste in matters of household adornment, while its influence has been wide spread, developing in various parts of the country an interest which has taken the form of practical work. Patriotic Americans feel that American art should have a prominent place in American homes, and this society has proved a powerful factor in the effort.

THE ASSOCIATED ARTISTS.

In modern art work the textiles and tapestries of the Associated Artists, of New York, stand without a rival. The textile fabrics are of the most pronounced artistic designs and made by American manufacturers in the most complete manner. The effects are beyond all praise, and the goods prove beyond any question that American artists and manufacturers can, under the proper conditions, produce the finest of decorative textiles. The tapestries are also famous, not only in this country, but in Europe. The dainty designs of Miss Dora Wheeler have been developed by the needle in thousands of stitches, the tapestries being wrought with exquisite care and patience. The efforts of the Associated Artists have been toward the creation of a standard for decorative work, a standard for American textile workers, and through years of patient toil the work has gone forward until, to-day, the demand for these goods exceeds the supply, and the growth of art knowledge in this country is slowly bringing both manufacturers and consumers to a realizing sense of the situation, that we depend upon imported goods because we are too impatient to manufacture for ourselves, not because goods cannot be made in America better than anywhere else. Now that American silks and American textiles have become the fashion in Europe they will probably receive more considerate treatment at home.

A SOUTHERN ARTIST.

Miss Weeden, of Huntsville, Alabama, is an artist of rare perceptions, poetic fancy and fine execution. An invalid for many years, she amused herself with fancy forms and combinations of color until she has wrought her soul into her work. During the season of 1885-86 a party of ladies from Chicago, visiting in Huntsville, were to give a little dinner party, and, needing menu cards, were directed to the invalid artist as one who might contrive something for the occasion. This she did

with reluctance, fearing, as she said, her native fancy might not be suited to society occasions. The visiting ladies were so charmed with tiny artistic trifles about the invalid's home that they urged her to paint something for them to take home; and after a time this patient invalid put into their hands an exquisite piece of work. It was a woman's face, showing a perfect outline, clear, pulsating color in the face, a wealth of golden hair trailing in rippling masses upon the fleecy clouds which seemed to support the fairy-like conception, rolling up against the fair, white throat, mounting above the head and forming a radiant halo above the animated face. A tiny bit of pale blue sky formed a background for the face and completed a beautiful picture. Miss Weeden is a careful artist, and many friends hope to see her work in home decorative departments.

A STAINED GLASS DESIGN.

In stained glass the finest effects are produced in floral designs and figures. The floral designs are drawn from nature, and retain all the simple beauty of the flower, while the light, as it filters through the richly-tinted glass, gives a tremulous effect, which seems to impart a life-like beauty. The background, of neutral tone, of course, serves to enhance the strength of the ornamental grouping. In figure designs one of the most striking shown of late, represents a woman standing upon the shore. The cold waves stretch into the dim distance, the sky is touched at the horizon with a bit of brilliant color, while in strong relief against the gloom, stands the figure of the woman, whose heavy garments seem swept by a strong wind from the sea; her face, bright and beautiful, is the only bit of warmth and color in the scene, which is wonderfully realistic. These designs are from the workshop of Miss Caroline Nolan, of Boston, who is pronounced by artists and manufacturers, one of the finest designers in stained glass in this country. All her designs are executed by skilled workmen under her immediate supervision, the work being done in connection with one of the leading art furnishing houses of Boston, whose exquisite specialties are found in many homes.

COLONIAL FURNISHING.

A colonial cottage style of furnishing will utilize old-fashioned furniture, and with a few touches of color the oldest and oddest bits from Lang Syne become useful and extremely ornamental. Take an old-fashioned house, well built and well preserved, as many New England homesteads are, and you have the foundation for a substantial, artistic home. If the exterior has never been painted, so much the better; the modern antique shingles can never approach in deep tone the weather-beaten ones. The roof can be painted; or better still, put tiles in long rows down the divisions of the roof, carry them along the eaves and place a few beside the broad doorstep. The interior walls should be of a colonial yellow. If the walls are papered—and this style of finish is preferred—it is a simple matter to carry out the plan by consultation with any leading paper-hanging firm.

The most satisfactory wall treatment, however, is to put on soapstone finish. This material is applied as easily as plaster, can be made perfectly smooth, and, by using the pure white soapstone of the Carolinas as a foundation, the material can be produced in any color or shade. The walls can be kept clean and bright by using soap and water freely for cleansing. Aside from artistic grounds these walls are of first importance as being healthful, always in order and not subject to disfigurement. The base boards should be of oak, walnut, cherry, maple or Southern pine, finished in its natural state; the cornice should correspond and the doors have their panels filled with wood veneer from the same growth. The door panels will be very handsome with branches of leaves, fruit, flowers or seeds of the tree to which the wood belongs, painted in tiny clusters or drooping garlands. By representing the tree products at different seasons a variety will be obtained, and even the bare branches can be made very artistic and bewitching with a touch of sparkling frost along their sharp outlines—frost produced as it is on Christmas cards. In draperies the window curtains should be short, put up in the old style, shirred at the top with a tiny ruffle left standing for a finish. The curtains may hang straight and be pushed back, entirely clearing the window, or tied back from the centre of the window, held by old-fashioned gimp fastenings. The draperies should be brown or yellow for the drawing-room, while red or pink will brighten the sitting-room, and blue in light tones is quiet and restful for sleeping rooms. If you have old-fashioned high-backed chairs with rush bottom seats, stain the rush with oak stain, or bronze the whole affair. The old-fashioned book case, with its plain glass windows, only needs a silken curtain, shirred across the glass inside, and a little furniture polish over the woodwork to make it bright; and this departure need not disturb the book arrangement in the least. The old-fashioned writing desk, with pigeon holes and tiny drawers above the quaint folding top, needs a drapery curtain also of silk; golden ground with shaded figures of brown in relief will prove effective. Mount the curtain on a brass rod, so it can be easily moved aside. All the large old chairs can be stained to match the woodwork, if they are of the very old style which did not encourage paint and which nowadays are found as keepsakes in city homes, scrubbed and polished to a painful degree of whiteness. A little oak stain will soften the outlines and a bright cushion of raw silk, with large bows of ribbon to hold it in place, will make the relic more comfortable even in a city home, while in the colonial cottage its beauty will be still greater.

NEW DESIGNS IN PORTIERES.

The most artistic, durable and effective draperies are made of plush, the tone of color being in harmony with the room furnishing, or offering a brilliant contrast, as the fancy dictates. The favorite portière for this season is of plush, a model being shown of deep wine color, broad enough to cover the doorway without extra folds. The sides are finished plain, being blind stitched upon the lining, the lower border finished by large plush

balls. The ornamentation consists of a branch of woodbine leaves, bright with the red and golden touches of autumn. The branch is thrown across the upper portion of the portière, falling with careless grace from right to left. The leaves are painted upon the material in oil colors, and the effect is pronounced by Mr. Louis Tiffany as superb. This creation belongs to a young Boston firm, whose artistic furnishings have the charm of individuality, marked by well-trained art methods applied to home decorations, which retain a home atmosphere, carrying the tone of a room, however simple, into a harmony of form and color very gratifying.

A pair of very handsome portières represent North and South. The groundwork is of peacock blue furniture satin. North is represented by tall pine trees, upon which the frost glistens, the clear, blue sky fairly sparkles with the breath of winter, while the snow fields cover all the country side. South is warm and bright. Live oaks clustered at the left are green and bright, magnificent in their huge trunks and interlacing branches. Upon the right, tall southern pines stretch their arms, from which festoons of Spanish moss hang gracefully, while the tiny bayou stretches into the middle distance and is lost to sight beneath the luxurious tangle of a tropical growth. The soft blending of color is exquisite, while in both North and South the atmosphere peculiar to each is well portrayed. The designs are original and the color treatment is very unique and pleasing. The artist is a young lady of Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

THE COWBOY IN ART.

The interest in art matters in Denver, Colorado, is strongly marked and well sustained. Both in needlework and brush studies, the originality of compositions and bold handling of color by local artists is very noticeable. The best subjects are purely American, or, rather, superlatively Colorado, in character, clear, strong, bright and fascinating, with a breezy freshness which charms and a warmth of color born of the pure sunshine of that hilly country. Nature is the model, and the artists follow faithfully as they may through the varied scenes, which seem a veritable wonderland when transferred to canvas. One of the most unique collections of the year belongs to Mrs. Kellerman, who has immortalized the much-abused cowboy of the Western prairies by grouping his antics for decorative purposes upon a dozen plaques. The group is full of interest and wild, picturesque beauty, being divided into twelve parts, representing every-day life. There is a night scene full of quiet beauty, and morning shows bustling activity preparatory to serving breakfast. Active life is shown by a number of cowboys in pursuit of wild horses in southwestern Kansas. Cowboys trying to hold a herd of cattle in the face of an approaching blizzard; a desolate group representing the scene of destruction after the blizzard has passed, heads, horns and hoofs of beasts standing in bold relief against the huge snow drifts which cover the poor half-dead creatures; cowboys hunting the antelope,

circling to cut out beef steers, having a brush with the Indians, branding calves, struggling with bucking horses, chasing buffaloes and the finish, complete a set of sketches which have attracted great attention the present season.

NOTES.

Old-fashioned dimity curtains, with borders of tiny interlacing cords, terminating in tassels, are fashionable.

Lamp shades are of pure colonial yellow in color, made of paper or silk, bordered with fringe of paper or silk.

Plushes from our American manufacturers rank high as durable in color and effective in draping by reason of their finely-woven frames.

Pupils in the art school of Cooper Union, New York, are sending out many good designs for floor carpets, wall papers and decorative fabrics.

Onyx from North Carolina is very pure, and the delicate pink tones, fading at times into a transparent pearl color, are very beautiful, and form valuable additions to interior finishing.

Screens seem indispensable to the cosy corners of a house. Very fine models are covered with rare old tapestries; the screen frames generally are made of native wood finished in natural colors.

American wall paper manufactures show fine goods, equalling in beauty of design and perfection of finish the imported papers. The home manufactures are leading with many art furnishers, on account of their softness in tone and artistic adaptation.

At the Denver Exposition in October, Miss Fannie Koenigsberg exhibited the finest collection of fancy needlework. The designs were all original and materials of the richest kind were elaborately developed in forms suited to home decoration by the artist exhibitor.

For table service white linen damask with dainty white china, plain clear-cut glass and simple silver service is the fancy for the season, the only table ornamentation allowable, being clusters of natural flowers in tall cut-glass flower receivers, mounted in frosted silver.

In home decoration do not overload the rooms with bric-à-brac. Any article that has an excuse for existing at all, can be made beautiful if the form and construction are good. A bit of color can be thrown into any dark corner by a skilful arrangement of drapery, which shall serve as a background, and while throwing beauty into the room serves as a little receiving corner for odds and ends, little dark trifles, which need something bright to cheer them up.

White has been introduced for interior finish; white paint for woodwork, white ceiling and if not a white wall, only a very delicate tone of color is permitted. Following this fancy, there are old-style rush-bottom chairs painted white, the corners finished by caps of polished brass. Picture frames of

white, with a border of gilded beads, show a broad, flat design in the frame, which serves as mat border and frame combined.

If you have a window whose outlook is unpleasant, cover the window pane with pressed ferns attached to the glass with a bit of mucilage. Place the ferns upright, as though they were growing, filling in every bit of the glass, then tack over the entire sash a piece of white or yellow lace; netting or wash blonde will do nicely, protecting the leaves without destroying their beauty.

Another pretty arrangement is to use Spanish moss in the same way, dipping it first into alum water, when you have a mass of drooping crystals against the pane which shuts out every bit of gloom or dreariness of prospect, and catches with every stray gleam of sunshine or flash of gas light, a tremulous beauty most fairy-like. Moss prepared in this fashion is one of the industries of southern women, whose delicate fancy and patience are bringing so many rare and beautiful articles into the market for home decoration.

A very handsome hall chair has a frame made of bamboo canes, which are used for legs and fancy supports, or braces, beneath the wide seat. The back is built up of canes, the upright sides breaking into short cross lines which hold tiny carved panels. The arms are of canes placed upright; the top of the cane with its delicate tracery design is used for the end of the arm, beneath and beyond which the joints of bamboo are placed like a tiny fence.

Fireplace screens of matting are very artistic and durable. The material is used lengthwise, allowing the border to serve as an upper finish, while the lower edge is cut off and fringed; along the border are placed full tassels, made from soft manilla rope, held in place by brass rings. The surface of the matting is given a dull-toned background, and the centre space is filled with a picture of long ago, the wide, open fireplace, blazing wood fire and kettle on the crane, making up a charming group. The screen is mounted on a heavy brass rod.

Hand-wrought decorations in iron are growing steadily in public favor. Very elaborate designs and exquisite workmanship are shown in chandeliers, newel posts, lanterns, door knockers, grates and fire sets. A mantel facing of hand-wrought iron, shows a design of leaves, flowers and tendrils of delicate form following the outlines of the side supports, clustered at the corners in a careless fashion, and grouped above the fireplace closely in a drooping garland. The petals of the flowers, the veining of the leaves, the twist of the clinging tendrils are all wrought with extreme care, and the degree of perfection attained bears comparison with the old Spanish ironwork. The finest hand-wrought

iron work used in house decoration is designed and made by American artists and artisans.

Wall papers are light in color, the surfaces shaded in deepening tones which follow through every distinct color used. The simple forms, showing small conventional figures, are used for sleeping rooms, alcoves or upper halls, while for larger rooms, particularly drawing-rooms, the patterns are large and flowing, conventional in form, but approaching floral designs. The background is of gold or silver paper. The figures in relief are of felt, pressed into compact form. The paper is put on the walls plain, with a narrow molding of gilt or silver, or of wood in natural colors, used as a border at the top and base of the wall space.

A very handsome room is furnished in Louis XIV. style, the centre wall space covered with tapestry, which is closely fitted to the walls and confined at the corners. The wainscoat is of antique oak, carried high on the wall space, the borders carved in bold relief, while the cornice follows the same design, outlining the ceiling, which is of panelled oak. The walls are ornamented with armor, artistically placed, while over the windows there falls a steel tracery, made from tiny bits of linked armor. As a background, placed next the window sash, there is a full-shirred curtain of pale yellow silk, to be drawn aside at pleasure. This forms a very effective finish to the outlines of the armor, lights up the room and heightens the effect of the deep-toned interior.

In hanging baskets for the sitting-room, baskets to hold trifles, some very pretty affairs are made of willow twigs braided with corn husks or coarse swamp grass. The grass is braided with three strands loosely. The twigs run through the border, and the shape can be square or three-cornered, folded from the corners toward the centre or made in tunnel shape. Twigs should be wet and twisted into handles, or supports, to hold the basket upon the floor or table. For finishing, use bronze or gilding, attach large bows of ribbon at the corners and the effect will be found unique and pretty.

The small Japanese screens to be used before the fireplace show new forms this year. They are made up in this country from odds and ends of Japanese bric-à-brac and the results are very fine, when the lower portion of the screen is filled in with a Japanese wall banner or sliding panels, and the upper portion with lattice work, which can be bought at so much a foot. Back of the lattice falls a curtain of soft China silk. The bright colors peeping through the irregular lattice work give a touch of animation very pleasant. Large Japanese screens are made in the same way to divide into cosy nooks, rooms which are uncomfortably large.

